



Gaels men's rugby takes on Army in thrilling contest.

Photos by Tim Mickiewicz

SMC Men's Rugby Ends Season Ranked #5

By Jennifer Wake

In one of the final games of the season at Penn State on April 20, the Saint Mary's men's rugby team defeated the highly touted cadets of West Point, 31-27, in one of the biggest upsets in the USA Rugby Round of Sixteen.

Head Coach Tim O'Brien described it as "an absolutely thrilling contest." Although Army was in charge for the bulk of the game, leading 24-21, and with Gaels lock Ryan Martens out with a concussion, the Saint Mary's team hung tough. With fifteen minutes left in the match, flyhalf Volney Rouse tied things up with a penalty goal, bringing it to 24-24. Army answered with their own penalty goal before Rouse scored the game-winning try, with less than five minutes remaining in the match.

"The team displayed an extreme sense of poise and confidence in their come-from-behind victory," said head coach Tim O'Brien. "Senior Volney Rouse and sophomore Brandon Vedder were absolutely outstanding."

The next evening the Gaels took on Mid Atlantic conference #1 Navy who had rested 10 starters the previous night in their win over Clemson. Although Saint Mary's led until the third quarter, once the Midshipmen took the lead, they held it until the end.

"This was a technically poorly played match with many turnovers and a high penalty count," O'Brien said. "We held a 17-10 lead with 12 minutes remaining, but at that time [SMC player] Kevin Swiryn, an absolute standout, was assessed a yellow card penalty."

The Gaels were forced to play one man short for 10 minutes – a severe blow.

"It didn't take Navy long to exploit [our] short hand as they scored 14 quick points and found their way to the final four," said O'Brien. "It was a frustrating loss; we were certainly not at our best."

O'Brien says standouts on the day were Volney Rouse and senior Matt Leatherby, who played the entire game at scrum half with a separated shoulder.

SMC ended the season 18-3, ranked #5 in USA Collegiate Division I.



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